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BRONWYN. Hey, Bronwyn here, the voice of Alice Harlow. We know. Two weeks is a long time to wait between episodes. If you need more content to fill the Station Arcadia shaped hole in your heart, go to pledge to our Patreon. We post behind the scenes content, access to the Station Arcadia music, and so much more. You should also make sure to follow us on Twitter and Tumblr to catch all of our quality posting. Thanks, and enjoy episode 12 - Three Ways Money Can Buy Happiness.

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. Welcome, anyone. Have you had enough water today? Remember to hydrate.

[KASS TAKES A DRINK OF WATER]

You're listening to Station Arcadia.

[THEME MUSIC PLAYS]

KASS. Good day, listeners! I hope everyone is staying safe out there. Well, as much as anyone can ever really be safe. Yesterday when I woke up there was a real downpour outside - turns out Arcadia drifted into a storm in the middle of the night. Jo grumped about it all day, but Lyssel, Z. and I spent some time just sitting out in the rain, listening to the thunder. I've missed storms like that.

We've been drifting off the western coast of Hardizan for a while, and their weather tends to be more... temperate, so this was a welcome change.

Ghosts, I sound like Marvin just going on, and on, and on about the weather. That's not why we're here - let's get into the story.

[TWO CLICKS]

Life in Hardizan is hard for almost everyone, but no job is harder than that of a mother. Livia O'Neil had never known the world to be kind, but nothing drove that home so much as when she received a telegram from the factory where her daughter worked, saying her daughter had been in an accident.

A *fatal* accident.

Livia's vision started to go dark around the edges as she struggled to process the information. She felt her world begin to collapse around her.

"Mom, Cara ate all the oatmeal!" Yelled a small voice from the direction of the kitchen. Livia blinked fast, trying to clear the tears from her eyes. When had she started crying? She took a few steps away from the door and sat down on the hall bench, breathing heavily.

"Then find something else Malaida." She replied, trying to stop her voice from shaking. God. Annie is only 16. Had only been 16. Would never get any older than 16. Livia felt like she was about to throw up.

"But Mom, there's nothing else! I'm hungry!" Said Malaida. Livia tried to pull herself together as she heard her youngest daughter's footsteps drawing closer. Evidently she was unsuccessful because the next words out of Malaida's mouth were soft and scared.

"Mom? Is something wrong?"

Livia had never been one to hide anything from her kids. They'd known where babies came from since they were old enough to understand language. They'd known about death since they were old enough to ask why they didn't have a father.

So she told the 8-year old quite plainly that her older sister Annie had died.

And then she broke.

KASS. It seems like we're in for another heavy story today, listeners. I'll try to break it up a bit. Let's see what Peaches is getting up to.

[TRANSITION]

EXT. UPTOWN SINCLAIR, HARDIZAN

[THE MOTORBIKE PULLS UP AND TURNS OFF. PEACHES SIGHS, THEN WALKS UP TO THE HOUSE AND KNOCKS ON THE DOOR.]

PEACHES. *(to herself)* Please be Daryn, please be Daryn please be Daryn, please be Daryn...

[KNOCKS ON THE DOOR, THE DOOR OPENS.]

DARYN. Hello Courier.

PEACHES. Hey, I've got a couple letters for the boss today.

DARYN. Thank you. How's your day going?

PEACHES. Overall good! Made a new friend, didn't have to deal with Oswald today since he just had some tax forms, and it's beautiful out! You showing up to the door tied everything together with a bow.

DARYN. Now let's hope there's no issues back at your work, tap on tin.

PEACHES. Cogs, if anything happens at the end of the day I'll be furious.

DARYN. *(laughing)* I'm sure it'll--

JEBEDIAH. *(firmly, from down the hall)* Daryn.

DARYN. Oh. Yes?

JEBEDIAH. Who's at the door?

DARYN. The courier, sir.

JEBEDIAH. *(who has walked up to the door)* Oh.

PEACHES. Hello Jebediah. I feel as if we may have got off on the wrong foot last time--

JEBEDIAH. Have you delivered my mail, courier?

PEACHES. Yes sir.

JEBEDIAH. So, you are not only loitering on my property, but keeping my butler from doing his job.

PEACHES. Apologies, I didn't mean--

JEBEDIAH. Get back to work, or I'll contact your supervisor and have you removed from your position.

PEACHES. I don't think that's necessary--

JEBEDIAH. Beg your pardon?

PEACHES. I mean, I just don't believe such drastic measures need to be taken. I was just having a polite conversation with Daryn.

JEBEDIAH. Do we have a problem, Courier?

PEACHES. I don't believe so.

JEBEDIAH. Then you are mistaken. Get off of my *property*. *Or I will have you removed. Is that clear?*

PEACHES. *(deep breath, then mumbled)* Sure.

[THERE IS A LONG PAUSE.]

JEBEDIAH. Hm.

[THE DOOR CLOSSES, AND PEACHES STANDS FOR A MOMENT BEFORE WALKING AWAY.]

[TRANSITION]

INT. STATION ARCADIA

KASS. Welcome back.

KASS. It's impossible to ever fully "get over" the loss of a child, and six months later the wound had barely scabbed. But still, life moved on for Livia and her remaining children. Malaida and Cara were never quite as carefree as they were before the accident but, Livia reflected, they never were that carefree in the first place. Life was hard for the O'Neil's, it always had been. As much as she wished it was otherwise, Malaida and Cara knew what it was to be hungry. They knew what it was to be poor.

12-year old Cara knew that she would have to start working soon. Livia, for all her honesty, tried to hide it from her, but Cara was smarter than that. She could see the portions of food growing smaller each day, and she knew what it meant - the compensation coin for Annie had run out.

Livia had hoped so desperately that with Annie working, she could get both Cara and Malaida through second school. Maybe then they'd be able to get somewhere beyond the factories. Maybe then they wouldn't grow up to be just like her - unable to work, selling bin junk on the street to try and keep her kids fed.

Livia still had hope - some hope - that things could go well. It was one of the things people liked about her, even if they couldn't quite put their finger on it. So many people in Hardizan had broken spirits, broken from working long days, day after day, and seeing the world in all its harsh cruelty. Livia had seen and experienced tragedy enough to break anyone, but not only did she keep going, she kept hoping. It was miraculous.

This wasn't to say that Livia was cheerful. There was no room for cheer on the somber mid-winter day when Cara took a job at the same factory that killed her older sister. Livia had hoped that somehow, she could find the coin to last them through the winter until her sales picked up in the spring. In the end it just wasn't possible. Livia urged Cara to try and find a part time job, something to do after school, but there was nothing. The factories wanted full-time or bust.

So Cara went to work. And Livia mourned - mourned Annie, and mourned the life Cara could have had.

KASS. In the spring, Livia's sales picked up as usual. No one wanted to stop and check out the wares laid out on her blanket when it was cold and pouring rain, but as spring came people started to slow down, just a bit. She couldn't scavenge through the junkyards herself - her crutches got in the way and she didn't have the flexibility to reach in bins - so she'd send Malaida to collect things after school. Cara helped when she could, but most of the time, she was too busy. Some days when Livia's wares started to run thin she'd walk over to the other side of town to buy bits and pieces, and then return and resell them at a higher price. She wasn't proud of the work she did, but she

didn't mind it. It put a bit of extra coin in their pockets and that's what mattered.

The second time wasn't a telegram. One day, Cara simply didn't return. Livia telephoned the factory, but it had shut down for the night. The next morning, she phoned again. The lines were busy. She stayed on hold for hours, waiting inside when she should have been out selling on the street corner, but the automated message stayed the same. So, on that fateful summer afternoon, Livia made her way to the factory and banged on the steel door until someone eventually came to deal with her.

"Where's my daughter." She demanded. The factory worker had no clue, had never heard of someone named Cara. He said he'd ask around. After about an hour of waiting in the heat and speaking to various employees, she finally started to get a picture of what had happened. One of the boilers had exploded, and several employees had been killed. Unfortunately, their IDs had been melted, and a few of the bodies were unable to be identified. Livia asked them to show her the bodies, just to confirm what she thought she knew, but they had already been taken to the incinerator and marked as a lost cause. So Livia went back home.

There was nothing else to do.

KASS. Listeners, I... I need a moment, sorry. Let's go to a break.

[TRANSITION]

[EXT. UPTOWN SINCLAIR, HARDIZAN]

[MOTORCYCLE SOUNDS. YOU CAN HEAR LAVINIA OVER THEM.]

LAVINIA. Oh hello Courier!

[THE BIKE TURNS OFF.]

PEACHES. (*tired*) Hello Mrs. Lavinia.

LAVINIA. Oh dear, what's happened?

[PEACHES DIGS AROUND IN THEIR BAG.]

PEACHES. Doesn't matter.

[THEY FIND THE CORRECT LETTER AND HAND IT OUT.]

PEACHES. Here you go.

[LAVINIA TAKES THE LETTER.]

LAVINIA. Come sit down dear.

PEACHES. You know I can't do that Mrs. Lavinia.

LAVINIA. You can spare a few minutes, Courier, no one will be the wiser.

[SHE WALKS PEACHES OVER TO THE CHAIR ON THE PORCH AND SITS THEM DOWN.]

LAVINIA. Emmeline! Will you bring out some lemonade for Courier Marks?

EMMELINE. *(from inside)* Oh, the courier's here! I'll bring some out!

PEACHES. Really Mrs. Lavinia...

LAVINIA. Now hush, let us take care of you. You look like you've had quite the day.

PEACHES. *(sigh)* Like you wouldn't believe.

LAVINIA. Want to talk about it?

PEACHES. Just... *(sigh)* people who have money think they're entitled to the world and more.

[EMMELINE COMES OUT OF THE HOUSE AND HANDS A GLASS OF LEMONADE TO PEACHES.]

EMMELINE. Oh, you're right dear. But what can we do about it?

LAVINIA. We've got a roof over our heads and each other to keep us company. A lot of rich folk don't find the joy in that.

EMMELINE. Sad lives indeed. Sometimes I think people could use some more joy. I mean, that Jebediah fellow is a great example.

LAVINIA. He wouldn't recognize joy if it hit him in the face, dear. All he's got is corporations and coin.

EMMELINE. Does some nasty things, that one.

PEACHES. Oh? Uh, like what?

LAVINIA. He got a warning about safety protocols in one of his factories, didn't he?

EMMELINE. Oh, yes that was last week wasn't it? I heard he paid his way out of the situation. It's not fair if you ask me, the man needs to have some consequences!

LAVINIA. Oh, you know they won't pin him for anything. He's too good at filling their pockets.

EMMELINE. Well, what can you do. A man like that will do as he pleases, there's nothing for it.

LAVINIA. At least he's not hurting anyone.

[CHAIR SCRAPE AS PEACHES STANDS UP]

PEACHES. I'm terribly sorry, Mrs. and Mrs. Rose, but I have to get back to work. Thank you for the lemonade!

EMMELINE. It's not a problem Courier, come by any time. Even when you're not on the clock!

PEACHES. *(half-joking)* I'm always on the clock, Mrs. Emmeline. Have a good day!

LAVINIA. You too Courier Marks. Say hello to that boy of yours!

PEACHES. Will do.

[MOTORCYCLE REVS UP AND OFF THEY GO.]

[TRANSITION]

[INT STATION ARCADIA]

KASS. Alright. Let's get back into it.

The next few years were difficult for the O'Neils, to say the least. Even once Malaida had another growth spurt and could conceivably pass for 12, Livia kept her in school and didn't let her take up so much as shoe shining. She hadn't been able to keep her other daughters safe, and she felt that weighing on her daily. But Malaida - Malaida would get through first school and then second, and then a trade school besides. There was nothing Livia wouldn't sacrifice to make it happen.

She started selling wares on the street before sunrise, and stayed long after sundown. She would knit copper constantly to make wire mats, to the point where her store became known for them. Sometimes, in the winter when her wallet was just too tight, she would beg.

The only thing Livia never did was steal. Not out of any sort of moral stance - there were no morals to survival. It wasn't because of her crutches either - sure, it was hard to tiptoe but there were other ways. Malaida even asked her a few times, if she'd ever thought about pinching from the other street sellers. Of course she had, but Livia knew she could never risk it. If she were caught and carted off, Mallaidh would be on her own. There would be no-one to support her.

Unfortunately, just because she chose not to steal didn't mean others granted her the same respect. In the past few months, she'd often come back from a quick break to find her most expensive wares gone, with only a single cog in their place. Once as she was returning she spotted a small figure dart around the corner, but she knew she wouldn't be able to catch them. She seethed over that lost coin, resented seeing that lone cog on her blanket. How dare they leave a *tip*, after what they were taking from her family.

At the end of each day, Livia would return home to find Malaida already asleep in bed, having eaten the sardines Livia had bought the night before. She would leave again in the morning before Malaida woke up. Some days Mallaida would come by after school, but most days she was off doing - whatever it was she did. Livia hoped she had some friends.

The day that Mallaidh died due to misuse of machinery was a rainy Tuesday in Autumn. Off in the distance, Livia heard the whistle of a train. She stared at the metals heels of a mechanical horse trotting by on the uneven cobblestones. Above her, standing in front of her blanket, her upstairs neighbor explained that Mallaidh had been

working for a month now. She'd been trying to earn enough coin that Livia would be able to stop working all the time. Up above her neighbor, in the sky to the east, was the floating district of Fultenwell city. Livia stared at it as tears welled in her eyes. No one living there ever had to deal with this.

Livia went with her neighbor to have a cup of tea, leaving her wares in the rain. It didn't matter.

Later, she returned to pack it all up. She was done, she'd decided. Done with selling things, and trying to make ends meet. When she walked around the corner she saw a young boy with long dark hair shoving a bunch of her wire mats into his cloth bag. He looked up as she came closer, freezing like a deer in headlights. She saw the cog in his other hand, poised to place it on her blanket, and knew this was the person who had been stealing from her.

Something in her eyes must have frightened him, because he put the mats back down, and held up his hands.

"Please don't call the cops on me ma'am. I didn't mean no harm, honest." He said, taking a few steps back.

Livia's anger was ice cold.

"You. Didn't. Mean. Any. Harm?" She said. "My daughter is dead, because I didn't have enough coin. Because of *you*."

They stood in silence for a moment. Livia felt blood pounding in her ears, drowning out the sounds of the city. The boy stared up at her, eyes wide. Suddenly, he sat with a dull thump on the cobblestones and began rooting through his sac. He started pulling out bits and pieces - a corner of bread, a rusty compact mirror, a defunct prosthetic hand that might fetch as much as a copper, a dog-eared storybook. Then - twelve cogs. He pushed them towards her.

Livia sat down across from him. She gathered the coin in her hands. It wasn't even worth a full copper, and wouldn't buy more than a few meals. She was sure it was all he had.

She felt her rage fade as quickly as it came. Tears began to roll down her cheeks and were washed away by the rain. She began putting his possessions back in his bag - wouldn't want the book to get wet. She gave him back his cogs.

"What's your name?" She said.

"Mikah", he replied.

"Why were you stealing from me?" said Livia.

He replied that he was hungry, that he needed the coin. She could understand that but she kept on.

"Why are you stealing from me, specifically?" She pressed.

"Because it was easy?" He said, not meeting her eyes.

Livia told Mikah in no uncertain terms that from now on, he'd be stealing from factories and the elite only. It'd be harder, sure, but he'd been a good enough thief to avoid her for months now. He could do it. Whatever he stole, he could bring it back to her, and she'd sell it, and give him a cut.

She watched his face light up as she proposed this new business venture. They shook on it.

Nothing could ever replace what the factories of Fultenwell had stolen from her, but that didn't mean she wouldn't damn well take what she could. And if she could help out street kids like Mikah in the process then maybe there was a reason beyond revenge.

Somehow, though her heart was heavy, Livia kept going.

KASS. Ghosts, things are rough out there. I feel bad sometimes, that it's so nice here in the Station. We have everything we need, and so many people out there are drowning.

I wish there was *anything* I could do. Sometimes I feel like these stories, they- they mean something, like sharing them is important somehow - but what am I actually doing? This doesn't fix anything.

Well, I guess at least this way I'm not hurting anyone.

Listeners, from the bottom of my heart - stay safe, stay moving, and stick close. You've been listening to Station Arcadia.

ELIANA ESDI. Station Arcadia is a podcast by Metal Steve Productions, and licensed under a creative commons attribution noncommercial share-alike 4.0 international license. It is produced by Eliana Esdi and C.V.V.M., and directed by Tovah Brantner. It is edited by Eliana Esdi and J. R. Steele, with soundscaping by Becker Hoang and music by Theo Goodwin. Today's episode was written by Eliana Esdi with scenes by J. R. Steele and Tovah Branter. It featured Jade Virginia as Kass, CaraLee Howe as Peaches, Felix Kaiser as Daryn, Jonaya Riley as Jebediah Moseley, Josephine Burnson as Lavinia and Grace Lurcher as Emmeline. Join us on Twitter and Tumblr @stationarcadia for more content. Check out our website, stationarcadia.com for a transcript of this episode as well as information on the cast and crew. Join us on Discord to chat with other fans using the link in the description, and finally, don't forget to subscribe to our patreon. Today's fun fact that I learned from a disreputable website is: sting rays can live up to 100 years, only if they are under the protection of a Great Blue Whale. The more you know.